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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 001262

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA  
ALSO FOR IO ACTING A/S HOOK, PDAS WARLICK  
USUN FOR KHALILZAD/WOLFF/SCHEDLBAUER  
NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/YERGER/MCDERMOTT

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [UNSC](#) [MARR](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: GEMAYEL WITH HALE: CLEAR USG SUPPORT FOR  
LEBANON NEEDED

REF: BEIRUT 1225

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) In a August 27 meeting, former president and Kataeb party leader Amine Gemayel told visiting NEA DAS David Hale that a clear message from the U.S. would be critical for Lebanon in its struggle against Iranian and Syrian attempts to destabilize the country. Gemayel supported the idea of indirect Lebanese talks with Israel on Sheba'a Farms; however, he believes peace talks with Israel would not be on the table. Gemayel said his Kataeb Party was "anxious" over the upcoming parliamentary elections and said additional USG support in the form of political communications consultants would be welcomed. He also said President Sleiman's National Dialogue agenda was unclear and added that Sleiman's presidency had gotten off to "a slow start." DAS Hale assured Gemayel that U.S. support to Lebanon remained firm and would continue. End Summary.

2. (C) Visiting NEA DAS David Hale, accompanied by Ambassador, NEA/ELA Lebano Desk Officer, and PolOffs, met with the former resident and Kataeb (Phalange) Party leader Amine Gemayel at the Kataeb headquarters in Beirut on August 27.

CLEAR SUPPORT FROM  
THE USG IS CRUCIAL  
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3. (C) DAS Hale told Gemayel that the purpose of his visit was to dispel any misperceptions that USG interest in Lebanon had waned. He wanted to reaffirm USG commitment to supporting Lebanese sovereignty and independence as well as GOL institutions. DAS Hale added that the USG also wanted Lebanon to implement fully UNSCRs 1559 and 1701. Gemayel agreed that Lebanon needed to move forward on implementing UNSCR's 1559 and 1701, and added that the Special Tribunal for Lebanon also needed to be established. However, Gemayel said Lebanon needed clear messages of support from the USG, UN, France, and its other friends.

4. (C) Gemayel stressed his belief that Iran and Syria were attempting to destabilize Lebanon through Hizballah and referred to the May 2008 clashes between pro-government

forces and the Hizballah-led opposition as a clear example of Iranian/Syrian attempts to exert influence over Lebanon. Gemayel argued that USG statements calling the May clashes a "domestic matter," take the spotlight off Iranian/Syrian interference in Lebanon. DAS Hale was quick to point out to Gemayel that the USG never referred to the May clashes as solely a "domestic" Lebanese affair and that USG pressure on Iran and Syria remains firm.

15. (C) Gemayel also expressed his frustration with the French, using similar arguments he made to DCM and Poloff during their August 19 meeting with Gemayel (reftel). Gemayel said France was too quick to begin warming its relations with Syria and that French statements supporting Syria's supposed positive steps towards Lebanon only help the March 8 opposition.

INDIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH  
ISRAEL ON SHEBA'A OKAY  
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16. (C) Gemayel said the GOL should also consider indirect talks with Israel over the Sheba'a Farms issue. He noted that Syria was doing this through Turkish mediators and even Hizballah negotiated with the Israelis through German and UN mediation on the prisoner exchange. France, Jordan, or the UN could serve as the third party negotiator between the GOL and Israel over Sheba'a Farms, Gemayel added. Gemayel dismissed the idea of direct Lebanese talks with Israel or indirect talks on a peace treaty, suggesting that the indirect talks cover only the Sheba'a Farms topic.

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17. (C) In Gemayel's opinion, a solution to Sheba'a Farms would remove Hizballah's excuse for holding on to its weapons. DAS Hale agreed that Hizballah needed to be stripped of this excuse and that the UN through Secretary General Ban Ki Moon would be a perfect third party to help Lebanon and Israel solve the issue of Sheba'a Farms. DAS Hale suggested that the GOL should support SYG Moon's proposed technical mission to Beirut, Damascus, and Jerusalem concerning the disputed territory.

KATAEB ANXIOUS  
OVER 2009 ELECTIONS  
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18. (C) Gemayel also announced that his Kataeb Party had a four point platform that it will promote in the upcoming elections: decentralization, secularism, neutrality, and a Lebanon where, "dialogue is supported and nurtured between the different domestic confessions and the international community." He said he brought in a new consultant from Booz, Allen, and Hamilton (BAH) Paris office, to serve as a the party's chief planner for the 2009 parliamentary elections. He added that Kataeb's work with the International Republican Institute (IRI) had been helpful and that they have an open dialogue with one another about the party's different needs.

NATIONAL DIALOGUE  
AGENDA UNCLEAR  
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19. (C) Gemayel also said President Sleiman's agenda for the planned National Dialogue remained ambiguous. He said Sleiman sent an envoy to talk to him about the National Dialogue. Gemayel told the envoy that two issues needed to be clarified in order for Kataeb to support the National Dialogue agenda: defining Lebanese "Sovereignty" and defining Hizballah's "allegiance."

110. (C) In reference to Lebanese sovereignty, Gemayel pointed out that large area of Lebanon remained out of the control of the GOL, referring to the Popular Front for the

Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC) camp in Qoussaya and Hizballah's control over Beirut's southern suburbs. He also wanted Hizballah to declare where its allegiances lie. He said Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah has made clear statements that his allegiance is to Iran's leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Gemayel said in his opinion the National Dialogue would not be successful without clarifying these two issues. Gemayel said the President's envoy did not state whether or not these topics would be on the agenda.

¶11. (C) Gemayel also said President Sleiman had gotten off to a slow start. He added that the first year is the most important in any presidency and he also criticized Sleiman's choices for advisors, saying he expected better. He argued that the lack of a new LAF Commander was sending a very bad signal and that Sleiman should work with PM Siniora to solve fill this vacancy immediately. DAS Hale said it was better to choose the right man for leadership of the LAF, than to choose the wrong man in a hurry.

#### HOW THE USG CAN HELP LEBANON

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¶12. (C) Besides sending a clear political message, Gemayel said the U.S. could support March 14 by continuing to provide expertise on how March 14 can improve its communication strategy. He also argued that March 14 could use organizational advice in preparation for the 2009 parliamentary elections. Gemayel said the work with IRI had been helpful and he welcomed additional support from other institutions as well.

¶13. (C) DAS Hale said USG support of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) would be another tangible way that the USG could show its support to Lebanon

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and counter Hizballah and that this would remain a priority for the USG. Gemayel argued that continued LAF support is key, but clear political support would be needed, or else the LAF assistance would go to waste. DAS Hale also said Lebanon had friends in the region referring to Egypt and Jordan, and ended the meeting saying that he was very encouraged by their discussion

¶14. (U) DAS Hale has cleared this cable.  
SISON